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SUBJECT: MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE - FOCUS ON IRAN

REF: A) MUNICH 19, B) MUNICH 20, C) MUNICH 21, D) DUBAI 75

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

¶1. (U) In remarks at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), February 6-8, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Ali Larijani repeatedly emphasized that the West -- and the U.S. in particular -- has been applying a double standard towards Iran since the Iranian revolution. He argued that it is up to the Obama Administration to build new bridges and emphasized that the carrot and stick approach is obsolete. He noted that Iran is a leader for the Muslim world, particularly regarding the Middle East conflict. For additional analysis of the Larijani speech, see Ref. D.

LARIJANI: IRAN IS THREATENED

¶2. (U) Following his speech, during the panel discussion on arms control on Friday, February 6, Larijani noted that Iran is surrounded by a number of violent conflicts, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Gaza, and that the situation in each has worsened since 9/11. He questioned the West's policy in the region - from fighting terrorism to searching for WMD in Iraq - pointing out the increase of opium production in Afghanistan and the ongoing violence in Iraq. Larijani did, however, welcome the appointment of Senator Mitchell as Special Envoy for the Middle East as a positive signal.

WESTERN DOUBLE STANDARD

¶3. (U) Larijani argued that the West - and the United States in particular - applies a double standard concerning the Iranian nuclear program. He claimed Western acquiescence in India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons programs (despite the sanctions directed against those countries following their nuclear tests). He ignored Iran's own violations under the NPT. The United States, according to Larijani, has violated its obligations under the contracts signed under the Shah government to deliver nuclear equipment to Iran. He complained several times that the U.S. has yet to refund the money that Iran lost on the contracts.

¶4. (U) Larijani claimed that nuclear weapons are not part of Iran's military doctrine, adding that attacking other states is a violation of the principles of the Islamic revolution. Furthermore, he expressed surprise about Western concerns about the recent launch of an Iranian satellite, commenting that a satellite is "not a weapon of mass destruction." He dodged a question about when or whether Iran would ratify the NPT Additional Protocol by emphasizing that there are currently 5000 centrifuges under IAEA surveillance. He further

claimed that all safeguards are accepted by Iran and all sites are inspected by the IAEA.

NEW DEMANDS ON WASHINGTON

¶15. (U) Regarding Washington's "new tone," Larijani pressed the U.S. to "admit its mistakes first," adding it is impossible to ignore or rebut the "Islamic Awakening." He emphasized that the current carrot and stick approach is dysfunctional, and must be replaced, noting that "we are not donkeys." He argued that Iran is ready to cooperate and recommended working toward long-term (and unnamed) common interest. He stated that it is up to the U.S. government to redefine a new approach to security, stating that "security must have a regional face."

HOLOCAUST MENTIONED

¶16. (U) Asked about Iran's policy towards Israel, Larijani refused to acknowledge the Holocaust, arguing that he is not an historian and that Iran does not have laws that ban the denial of the Holocaust. Larijani also criticized Western support for Israel, arguing that this gives Iran the right to support Hamas, which, he claimed "is weak."

OTHER LEADERS WEIGH IN ON IRAN

¶17. (U) During her speech on Saturday, February 7, German Chancellor Merkel emphatically warned Iran of tougher sanctions should there be no progress in the EU3+3 (P5+1) process. President Sarkozy later warned that time is working against the West. He noted particular concern with the launch of the Iranian satellite and indicated support for additional sanctions should Iran not be more cooperative. Sarkozy also called on Russia to cooperate more to halt the Iranian threat.

¶18. (U) German FM Steinmeier emphasized that while no one wants to deny Iran access to nuclear energy, it is unacceptable that Iran pursues a nuclear weapons program disguised as a civilian nuclear energy program. He pressed Iran to accept the offer by the E3+3 and seize the opportunity of overcoming 30 years of silence in its bilateral relationship with the United States. The Iranians must understand that it is impossible to negotiate as long as the centrifuges are turning, he noted. Unlike Chancellor Merkel, Steinmeier did not explicitly threaten tougher sanctions against Iran should their efforts continue.

¶19. (U) IAEA Director General Baradei argued for a "freeze for freeze" solution to break the gridlock on the Iran nuclear issue. He urged Iran to apply the Additional Protocol and freeze its enrichment program, offering a sanctions' freeze (or suspension) should that occur.

¶10. (U) Observers of the MSC were disappointed by Larijani's remarks. Even though some participants noted their understanding that Larijani does not want to undermine his possible presidential candidacy, the general impression was that Larijani's confrontational speech at the MSC represented a missed opportunity on the Iranian side. However, at the tail end of his comments, Larijani did note openness to regional discussions, which some participants felt may be a signal indicating future dialogue.

¶11. (U) NOTE: The MSC published a Farsi language audio file of Larijani's speech at the conference at:
http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu2009=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=226&.
The conference organizers have also promised to post the English interpretation. END NOTE.

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